

# Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter

## June 24, 2011



Dear Community Friends:

In our most recent newsletters, we brought you information on home security, how to better secure your doors and windows to deter a burglar from gaining entry, and how to make your home less attractive to a burglar from wanting to gain entry in the first place.

For this edition, we want to take the concept a bit further. Instead of just looking at your home, we want to expand the view and look at the block, the neighborhood and the surrounding community.

### **Broken Window Theory**

Some of you may be familiar with the "Broken Window Theory." The theory essentially maintains that there is a relationship between order/maintenance issues in geographic areas and the level of crime that occurs in the same area. The proponents of the theory posit that if a neighborhood looks as though no one is caring for it, (i.e. there are abandoned cars, broken windows, graffiti, trash and litter, overgrown and vacant lots) then it becomes a magnet for increasing levels of anti-social behavior. The theory suggests that as the order/maintenance problems increase, law-abiding individuals become more fearful and retreat from the area. The fewer law-abiding people involved in the area, the more attractive it becomes to those inclined toward criminal behavior. Soon the balance of that area tips to favor the criminal element rather than law abiding citizens.

I've seen it play out in every neighborhood in which I've worked over the past 20+ years. As a former Crime Prevention Coordinator, Grace Jansens, once said, "Neighborhoods have the amount of crime they tolerate." I've seen this born out in fact, not just in theory.

Neighborhoods that respond quickly to small changes in their environment have a reduced risk of larger crime problems developing. Some strategies that have been used successfully are:

- Prompt removal of abandoned vehicles.
- Fast clean up of illegally dumped items, litter and spilled garbage.
- Immediate paint out of graffiti (within 48 hours).
- Providing positive venues for teens to gather so they don't "hang out" on the corner.
- Fresh paint on buildings.
- Keeping sidewalks and gutters clean.
- Continual maintenance of vacant properties.

### **"Neighborhoods That Show They Care Have Less Crime."**

Some of you may have heard me say this in past presentations. Here's what I mean. You show you care by: reporting suspicious activity to police; reporting graffiti and removing it as quickly as possible; getting abandoned cars off the street; maintaining your property and holding absentee property owners accountable to maintain the properties they own, especially when those properties are vacant, and; picking up trash and litter and reporting any illegal dumping. You further show you care by communicating with your neighbors and acknowledging each other's presence when you see them on the street. You also acknowledge the presence in your neighborhood of those you *don't* know; say "hello." It sends the message that you are a welcoming neighborhood, it also sends the message to the individual you just greeted that you've seen them, which sends the message to them that they can be identified if they decide to engage in less than neighborly behaviors. By sending the message that you have pride in your community, when you greet everyone and let them know that they've been acknowledged, you also send the message to the criminal element that you are more likely to call police about suspicious behavior.

As Grace was saying, you choose what crime in your neighborhood looks like. When a neighborhood shows it cares, they have less crime. And you show you care by doing the things we listed above. But you have to do it. The city can't do it for you, the police can't do it alone, and the folks on the next block over can't do it, not by themselves. You have to be an active participant in your neighborhood environment and safety and show you care.

## Getting Rid of Graffiti

As mentioned above, one way to show you care is to remove graffiti as quickly as possible. The longer graffiti stays up, the more graffiti it attracts. Seattle Public Utilities is sponsoring a City-wide, Summer long graffiti paint out program. Please see the window below. If you are a community group, social group, block watch, concerned family, or a single person, you can get involved. This is a great way to get involved in your community in a positive way and clean up your neighborhood at the same time. And you show you care. For more information, contact Daniel Sims at 206-684-7790 or e-mail him at [Daniel.Sims@Seattle.Gov](mailto:Daniel.Sims@Seattle.Gov)



## Night Out Against Crime

As a reminder, **the 2011 National Night Out Against Crime will be Tuesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>**. Night Out is a national crime prevention event designed to heighten crime prevention awareness, increase neighborhood support in anti-crime efforts, and unite our communities. It is a great chance to reconnect with neighbors and share information with each other while learning more about crime prevention.

On-line registration for Night Out is open at <http://www.seattle.gov/police/Nightout/default.htm>.

Also, we have a Night Out presence on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/SeattleNightOut>. This will allow you to stay up to date with information before the event, receive crime prevention tips, share your ideas with others, and upload photos.

In 2010, over 1,200 blocks and about 50,000 people participated in Night Out events in Seattle, and we expect to see those numbers grow for 2011. You do not need to be in an active Block Watch to hold a Night Out event. However, if you would like to form a block watch, please indicate that on your registration (we have a check box for that). If you've never had a Night Out event in your neighborhood before, this is the perfect year to get involved! It's fun, it's free and this is the one night you can close down your non-arterial street at no cost.

And getting together with your neighbors, recommitting to watch out for each other, and reaffirming you will report suspicious activity to police are ways to show you care about your community.

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

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